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COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Thirty-fourth session
10-20 April 1995
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

PRIORITY SUBJECT: WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development

Note by the Secretariat

1. The Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session of 1993, approved the provisional agenda for the thirty-fourth session of the Commission for Social Development, including the priority subject, "World Summit for Social Development". The General Assembly, in its resolution 47/92 of 16 December 1992, in which it decided to convene a World Summit for Social Development at the level of heads of State or Government early in 1995, also decided that one of the objectives of the Summit would be to make appropriate recommendations regarding more effective action by the United Nations system in the sphere of social development, in particular measures and policies for the revitalization of the Commission for Social Development.

2. The World Summit for Social Development, which was held in Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995, adopted the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, which will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. The Economic and Social Council also has the Summit on its agenda and will, at its coordination segment of 1995 (27-30 June), consider a single theme: "Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system and implementation of the results of the major international conferences organized by the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields".

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3. In considering this priority subject, the Commission for Social Development will have before it the advance unedited text of both the Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action, the latter of which includes in paragraph 95 (f) one direct reference to the Commission for Social Development: "the Council, at its substantive session of 1995, should be invited to review the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission for Social Development, including consideration of the strengthening of the Commission, taking into account the need for synergy with other related commissions and conference follow-up".

4. In order to facilitate the deliberations of the Commission, some background information is provided below on the Commission itself and on the provisions of the Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action that are of direct relevance to international cooperation and the follow-up to the Summit.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

5. In 1946, the Economic and Social Council established a Social Commission to address social issues. In 1966, the Commission was renamed the Commission for Social Development and given a mandate to advise the Council on social policies of a general character, practical measures that might be needed in the social field, measures needed for the coordination of activities in the social field, relevant international agreements and conventions, and vital social problems in respect of which action or recommendations might be required either by the Council itself or by the General Assembly. In addition to that consideration of general social policy issues, the Commission addresses questions related to specific social groups, in particular youth, older persons and persons with disabilities. The Commission also reports to the Council on the extent to which the recommendations of the United Nations in the field of social policy are being carried out. The General Assembly is informed of the work of the Commission through the annual reports of the Economic and Social Council.

6. In its resolution 1986/14, the Economic and Social Council requested the Commission to consider specific proposals concerning ways and means of improving its work. Among the perceived needs for improvement were for a more selective focus, an in-depth discussion of a few carefully chosen subjects and an agenda that could be divided into three main parts: a general debate on the world social situation, the in-depth consideration of a few themes, and monitoring in terms of plans and programmes of action. It was stressed that the Commission should deal only with questions that were not considered by other specialized intergovernmental forums. Practical suggestions were then solicited from Governments and the Commission adopted a certain number of changes in its mode of operation. In particular, its substantive work was duly organized under three agenda items.

7. One of the functions of the Commission is to consider the Report on the World Social Situation, which was first published in 1952 and is currently published every four years under a General Assembly mandate. The most recent Report, published in 1993, is the thirteenth in the series. The next Report is due for 1997 and an interim Report is before the present session of the Commission. The regional commissions, with the exception of the Economic

Commission for Europe, publish surveys of economic and social trends and policies.

8. Prior to the World Summit for Social Development, the general framework for the work of the Commission was provided by the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 2542 (XXIV) of 11 December 1969, and the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future, which were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 42/125 of 7 December 1987.

9. Originally, the Commission had 18 members; that number was increased to 21 in 1961 and to 32 in 1966. The members are elected for a four-year term by the Economic and Social Council on the basis of the following pattern of geographical distribution: 8 from African States; 6 from Asian States; 6 from Latin American States; 8 from Western European and other States; and 4 from Eastern European States. The current membership of the Commission is provided in the annex.

10. Other functional commissions dealing with matters related to the work of the Commission for Social Development are: the Population Commission (27 members); the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (40 members); the Commission on the Status of Women (45 members); and the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, and the Commission on Human Rights (all with 53 members). The Commission on Human Settlements has 58 members.

11. The Commission currently meets every other year.

12. The substantive servicing of the Commission by the United Nations Secretariat has evolved over the years with the location of the social development unit or centre and with the requirements of an integrated approach to development. Currently, both the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis have responsibilities for its substantive servicing. Technical servicing is provided by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

II. RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE COPENHAGEN DECLARATION ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

13. The Summit took a comprehensive view of social development. The 10 commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration for Social Development refer to the following subjects: an enabling environment for social development; poverty; employment; social integration; situation of women; education and health; situation of Africa and the least developed countries; social aspects of structural adjustment; resources for social development; and a framework for international cooperation for social development.

14. Commitment 10 of the Declaration can be summarized as follows:

(a) There is a need for an improved and strengthened framework for international cooperation in a spirit of partnership;

(b) National action is necessary to implement the Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action, with the assistance, upon request, of the United Nations system;

(c) At the regional level, the regional commissions, in cooperation with regional intergovernmental organizations and banks, could convene on a biennial basis a meeting at a high political level to evaluate progress made towards fulfilling the outcome of the Summit. The regional commissions should report, through the appropriate mechanism, to the Economic and Social Council on the outcome of the meeting;

(d) The United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions should establish regular and substantive dialogue, including at the field level, for more effective and efficient coordination of assistance for social development;

(e) There is a need to strengthen the structures, resources and processes of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies and other organizations within the United Nations system that are concerned with economic and social development;

(f) The Economic and Social Council should review and assess, on the basis of reports of national Governments, regional commissions, relevant functional commissions and United Nations specialized agencies, progress made by the international community towards implementing the outcome of the Summit;

(g) The Council should report on that review and assessment to the General Assembly for its appropriate consideration and action;

(h) The General Assembly should hold a special session in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of implementation of the Summit.

15. In chapter V of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, "Implementation and follow-up", a number of basic principles are enunciated:

(a) While social development is primarily the responsibility of Governments, international cooperation and assistance are essential;

(b) There is a need to integrate goals and programmes and review mechanisms that have evolved separately in response to specific problems;

(c) Partnership among all actors and solidarity are critical elements;

(d) Relevant United Nations bodies, in particular the Economic and Social Council, should consider new and innovative ideas for generating funds and to offer any useful suggestions for this purpose (para. 93).

16. In the same chapter, it is indicated that comprehensive cross-sectoral strategies for implementing the Summit outcome should be formulated or

strengthened by 1996, and that international support for the formulation of such national strategies will require three types of actions by bilateral and multilateral agencies:

(a) Assistance in the formulation, coordination, implementation and monitoring of integrated strategies for social development;

(b) Coordination of the assistance provided by different agencies;

(c) Development of improved concepts and programmes for statistics and indicators.

17. The direct reference to the Commission for Social Development contained in section D of chapter V, "The role of the United Nations system", has been quoted in paragraph 3 above. Other relevant points include:

(a) The implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and of the Programme of Action should be carried out as part of an integrated and comprehensive implementation, follow-up and assessment of recent and planned United Nations conferences related to social development, and in the context of an agenda for development;

(b) The Council is invited to review the reporting system in the area of social development with a view to establishing a coherent system that would result in clear policy recommendations for Governments and international actors;

(c) The Council should oversee system-wide coordination in the implementation of the Summit outcome and make recommendations in this regard;

(d) The Council could convene meetings of high-level representatives to promote international dialogue on critical social issues and on policies for addressing them through international cooperation (para. 95 (d));

(e) The Copenhagen Declaration (Commitment 2 (a)) and the Programme of Action (para. 26) both call for the implementation of recommendations for the reduction and eradication of poverty as part of the activities for the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty in 1996. In addition, the Programme of Action recommends that the General Assembly declare the first United Nations decade for the eradication of poverty to follow the International Year (para. 95 (c)).

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18. In addition to presenting its views to the Economic and Social Council on the priority subject, the Commission may wish to take the above information into account in considering its agenda for subsequent sessions, in particular its choice of priority subjects.

Annex

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION a/

Membership in 1995	Term expires on 31 December
Argentina	1998
Austria	1998
Belarus	1995
Benin	1998
Bolivia	1996
Cameroon	1996
Chile	1996
China	1996
Côte d'Ivoire	1995
Denmark	1996
Dominican Republic	1998
Egypt	1998
Ethiopia	1998
France	1995
Germany	1995
Haiti	1995
Indonesia	1995
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	1998
Malta	1996
Mexico	1995
Mongolia	1998
Netherlands	1996
Norway	1998

Membership in 1995	Term expires on 31 December
Pakistan	1995
Philippines	1996
Russian Federation	1995
Sudan	1995
Togo	1998
Ukraine	1998
United States of America	1995
Yugoslavia	1996
Zimbabwe	1996

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a/ Thirty-two members; four-year term.